

UNICEF lauds govt efforts Pry students enrolment rises to 70 pc

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The enrolment of primary education in Bangladesh and other South Asian countries has marked a rise of 70 per cent in 1998 from 60 per cent in 1970. About 40 per cent children entering the primary schools drop out before reaching the fifth grade, said report of the State of the World's Children 1999.

In Bangladesh the primary school attendance rate is 75 per cent and the drop out rate is 25 per cent, said the report launched simultaneously in Dhaka and elsewhere in the world on Tuesday by UNICEF.

Releasing the report at a Press conference on Tuesday afternoon Shahida Azfar, UNICEF Representative in Bangladesh, said this year the report focuses on the rights of children to basic education because without education, children are virtually condemned to a life of

poverty, ill-health and general lack of material and intellectual well-being.

In developing countries over 130 million children of primary school age are out of school, about two thirds of them are girls and to ensure education for all within a decade the world would need to spend an additional US dollar 7 billion per year for the next 10 years on an average, the report said.

"To achieve education for all within a decade, the cost of which UNICEF estimates to be an additional US dollar 7 billion a year, on average — less that is spent on cosmetics in the United States or on icecream in Europe annually", said the report.

Terming the poverty as root cause of child labour, the report said, about 250 million children below the

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age of 14 work rather than go to school. 153 million of this child labour force are in Asia. In this context, the report appreciated the Bangladesh's initiatives to eliminate child labour from garments industry. The provision of education and some financial support have helped to eliminate child labour from the garments industry, it added.

The report said, poverty, disease, wars, economic transition, natural disasters, internal and cross-border migration have left millions of children in circumstances where their access to education is by no means guaranteed.

Describing the AIDS as a major problem for the world, the report said, AIDS, which has swept through Africa and now threatens to engulf Asia, has condemned millions of children to an uncertain future. Over eight million children below the age of 14 in sub-Saharan Africa have already lost their mothers or both parents to the AIDS virus.